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ABSTRACT

Presented in outline form, this paper describes a special program for gifted and talented students at a Massachusetts junior high school. Some of the topics discussed include goals of the program, design, implementation, evaluation, use of teachers as mentors, and identification of gifted students. (Author/LD)

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ANDOVER GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM

DEVELOPING TALENT OF GIFTED STUDENTS*

ANDOVER WEST JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
"Excellence In Everything"

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*Presented by William E. Hart at the 64th Annual Convention of the National Association of Secondary School Principals

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I. OVERVIEW

Andover West Junior High School has developed a "two-phase" program for gifted and talented students in grades 7, 8 and 9.

In Phase I, identified gifted and talented students are grouped, by grades, one hour a week during the first semester. The task of the group is to identify a problem and arrive at a solution through a process of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Developing the ability to apply a process of logical thinking in resolving a problem is a prime objective of the program.

During Phase II (second semester) each student selects an area of interest in which to concentrate. Students are then placed with a mentor in the community or school for a minimum of 1½ hours per week. The students will pursue their interests using a variety of activities designed by the mentor, to broaden knowledge and spark further investigation.

II. RATIONALE

The challenge of the gifted and talented student must be met for the benefit of society. Of 48 million youth of educable age, 3 million are considered gifted and talented. Students of high ability, creativity, and potential must be equipped to achieve self-fulfillment and assume responsible social leadership. Gifted and talented students require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the reg-

ular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.

The educator's task is to orchestrate the resources in such a way that gifted and talented students may be identified and accommodated within the school or community.

The success of the program will ultimately depend on the ingenuity of the educators in bringing together appropriate resources of people and materials for the gifted and talented student.

III. DEFINITION OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT

The Andover Public Schools define gifted and talented students as those who meet the United States Office of Education definition:

"Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons, who by virtue of outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contributions to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination:

1. General intellectual ability - 130 or above on individual I.Q. test.
2. Specific academic aptitude - 90% or above on STEP scores.
3. Creative or productive thinking.

4. Leadership ability.
5. Visual and performing arts.
6. Culturally or ethnically different student."

IV. GOALS

The program for gifted and talented students has established broad goals for both students and teachers.

Students:

1. Each student will develop an intrinsic motivation for excellence and individual responsibility in an atmosphere conducive to exploration and discovery.
2. Each student will develop the skills of task commitment in order to work toward realization of the potential of his/her gifts and talents.
3. Each student will develop competencies in areas of study beyond those prescribed in the regular classroom especially in the areas of divergent, abstract, and evaluative thinking.
4. Each student will work toward becoming self-directing in:
    a. independent study
    b. problem solving
    c. planning
    d. developing critical and creative thinking skills
5. Each student will receive support and guidance through his/her enrichment teacher.
6. Each student will develop an increased awareness of the humanities.
7. Each student will have an opportunity to interact with other gifted and talented students.

Teachers:

1. Each teacher will recognize that identified gifted students require a curriculum that is not provided in the areas of study in the average classroom.
2. Each teacher will provide curriculum for gifted students:
    a. in acting as a facilitator in the mentor program and/or
    b. in acting as a teacher providing a classroom process of learning in the areas of divergent, abstract, and evaluative thinking.

V. PROGRAM DESIGN

PHASE I
(First Semester)

Step	
1	Gifted and talented students identified in grade 7-8-9.
2	Gifted and talented students grouped by grades.
3	Gifted and talented students scheduled by grade, 55 minutes per week.
4	Problem-solving (analysis-synthesis-evaluation)
5	Outcomes

PHASE II
(Second Semester)

Step	
1	Gifted and talented students in grade 7-8-9 identify their areas of interest
2	Committee reviews areas and identifies clusters of interests and individual interests

3 Mentors within the school or school system are solicited for participation based on their expertise.

4 Community Resource Coordinator solicits adults in the community based on their interest and competence.

5 Mentors receive orientation, guidelines, educational contract forms prior to participation.

6 Students are scheduled with mentors a minimum of 1½ hours per week.

7 Program staff members coordinate schedules of mentors and students.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

The program for 1978-1979 is being implemented in two phases. During the first semester students have worked in their grade level groups on group problem-solving activities. In each case they have identified and analyzed an overall problem of significance to all, proposed a variety of solutions, selected appropriate and effective solutions, and implemented those ideas.

In grades 7 and 8, students move into the second phase of the 1978-1979 program. Each student will select an area of interest in which to concentrate. After identifying a variety of questions of significance in relation to this area, the student will investigate (explore) using one or more of the following activities:

a. individual study project.

b. mentorship with community person who is an expert in his area of interest.

c. small group of students with like interests working together on group project with teacher as facilitator.

d. small group of students with similar interests working with mentor who is expert in field.

e. selected field trips where appropriate for small groups.

In grade 9, some students will take part in the mentorship program. All students will continue to participate in the class group problem-solving activities, using the analytical and evaluative processes.

VII. MENTORSHIP

Whenever possible the teacher will act as resource person and guide to the students in the program and assist in the design and pursuit of projects suited to the individual's talents.

The concept of mentorship, however, is based on the reality that it is difficult for the general classroom teacher to provide the expertise needed by gifted students whose interests lie in specialized areas.

At the beginning of the school year, therefore, the gifted and talented students are surveyed to determine their preference in topics for further study and investigation. Once a focus for the individual's program has been established, every effort is made to match the student with a mentor with whom he/she will work alone or in a small group. Compatibility and commitment are stressed as the key to mutual effort and a direction proposal which recognizes the goals and expectations of both parties is therefore recommended at the commencement of a project.

Mentors are drawn from both faculty and community resources on a volunteer basis and a student may work with one or several persons during the course of the year, depending upon the extent of his/her interest in a given area. A commitment to a single project for at least the duration of one term is encouraged.

VIII. PROBLEM SOLVING

In the classroom, the teacher will provide activities, the mental process of which will lie in the highest order of objectives in Bloom's Taxonomy in the cognitive and affective domains.

The cognitive objectives lie in the areas of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The affective objectives lie in "conceptualization, and organization of values into a system which is a characterization of himself/herself."

IX. OTHER SPECIAL GROUP PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

At least one other special group program for talented students is in operation. The Music Enrichment Program Committee has developed a program of workshops. Several of the identified students referred to previously are also participating in these workshops.

A possible placement for students who come from the elementary school Math Talented program would provide participation in the activities of the Math League which meets regularly with other schools for competition.

X. IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

Students identified as gifted in the elementary school are placed in the West Junior High program for gifted and talented students in grade 7 with the approval of both parent and student. New students in grade 7-8-9 are screened based on the criteria established. Profile sheets of all students in the program are maintained from the time they enter the program until they leave the program.

During the school year, screening is conducted at grades 7-8-9 to identify students who should be added to the program. The screening begins with a review of previous years SCAT-STEP (ETS) scores to find any students scoring 90%ile or above on all achievement subtests. The following procedure will be followed on all students identified on the initial screening:

a. Baldwin Identification Matrix will be completed for each student.

b. Any students who appear after this search should be further examined via a Renzulli Rating Scale to be filled out by two teachers who are familiar with student's performance in class.

c. This information will be entered on the Baldwin Identification Matrix. If indicated, an individual I.Q. test will be administered (WISCR).

d. The rest of the student's teachers will be asked to provide an abbreviated rating for completion of the Baldwin Matrix.

e. A complete profile will be examined before a student is entered in the program.

f. It should be noted as stated above that a student of ethnically or culturally disadvantaged background who receives high ratings on teacher recommendations, may be admitted with a waiving of the I.Q. and SCAT-STEP requirements.

g. Raven's Abstract Reasoning test or a test of divergent thinking will be administered.

h. The parent will be asked to complete a recommendation form for the student and this information will become a part of the profile of the student. This form can also be used to initiate the consideration of a student for the program.

i. In grade 7, each student's preferred learning style will be determined through the process of cognitive mapping.

XI. TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT EXIT FROM PROGRAM

Flexibility is maintained by providing a process by which a student may leave the program temporarily or permanently for sufficient reason. The process can be initiated by:

a. student request
b. teacher request
c. parent request

Once a request is made to terminate the program temporarily or permanently, a conference will be arranged with student, teacher, parent, program coordinator and guidance counsellor. The advantages and disadvantages of terminating the program will be addressed. Following this review, the program coordinator will make a recommendation to the principal who will be the approving authority in such matters.

XII. EVALUATION

Evaluation of the program will consist of:

For the Student

1. Maintaining a score of 90%ile or above on SCAT-STEP tests.
2. Continuing high achievement in regular classroom studies.
3. Measuring attitudes toward self and program.
4. Maintaining a student log.
5. Evaluating processes in group problem solving activities.
6. Reporting of progress by the mentor.

For the Teacher

1. Structure
   a. Did the teacher realize the goals of the program?
   b. Did the student realize the goals of the program?
   c. In a task analysis, were most tasks in the higher order of Bloom's taxonomy in cognitive and affective domains?
   d. Does a test which was constructed to cover the knowledge hierarchy yield pass-fail information?
   e. Were profile folders maintained on each student which indicate personal and academic development?
   f. Does the program provide a flexibility and freedom of action which does not unduly restrict investigation?

2. Sequence of Curriculum Units
   a. Did students progress to a higher curriculum unit based on knowledge acquired in a lower unit?
   b. What additional analysis is required to determine the proper sequence of curriculum units?
   c. In the matter of control, has, or has not the student acquired the specific unitary capability being measured?

3. General Evaluation
   a. How well do these practices conform to the philosophy and objectives of the school?
   b. How well do these practices meet the needs of the community?

XIII. COORDINATION

The Andover Junior High School program for gifted and talented students is supervised by William E. Hart, Principal. The coordinator is Nora T. Harrison, English Department Head.

Providing the faculty leadership, Charity Hotham conducts the program in grade 7, Louise Tomlinson in grade 8, and Nora T. Harrison in grade 9.